

DIRECTIONS:

FROM ASHEVILLE: Take I-26E to exit 40 (Asheville Airport). Turn right on NC 280W. NC 280W becomes U.S. 64W in Pisgah Forest. Stay on U.S. 64W. At Sapphire, turn left on NC 281 and go south to entrance.

FROM SOUTH CAROLINA: Drive north on SC 130, which becomes NC 281. The entrance is on the right after driving into North Carolina.

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WHITewater FALLS:

landmark to discover



Discover the East's king of waterfalls. Watch it cascade over massive rock pillars and drop 411 feet to the river below.



Whitewater Falls: a cascading beauty

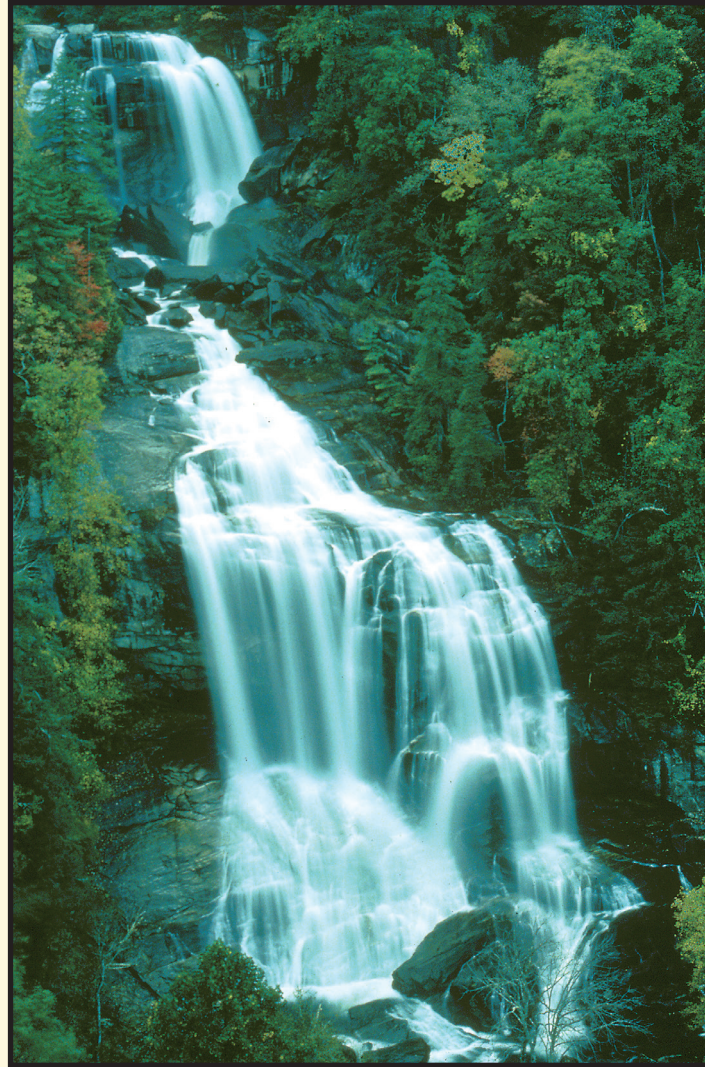


Whitewater Falls owes its existence to the Blue Ridge Escarpment, a sharp drop in elevation between the mountains and the Piedmont.

With a 411-foot plunge, Upper Whitewater Falls in North Carolina is the highest waterfall east of the Rockies. South Carolina's Lower Whitewater Falls falls another 400 feet.

Because of the escarpment's difficult access and rugged terrain, much of the area receives few visitors and has remained wild and undeveloped over the years.

In the cool, moist shade of steep slopes and rock cliffs, wildflowers and salamanders abound. This wild land is also a perfect haven for a rich array of ferns, mosses and fungi. Enjoy the beauty of blooms and berries throughout the seasons.



Catch a view of Whitewater Falls from two overlooks.

What Whitewater Falls Recreation Area offers

The Whitewater Falls Recreation Area is open from dawn until dusk year-round. The area features awesome views of Upper Whitewater Falls and Lake Jocassee. Picnic tables, flush toilets and ample parking are available.

Under the present fee program, up to 80 percent of the collections may fund improvements at this site. These improvements can range from trail construction to restroom renovation.



Whitewater Falls plunges over the Blue Ridge Escarpment.



Catesby's Trillium



Hay-Scented Ferns



Crested Iris

Where to find best views

For an excellent view of Whitewater Falls, follow the paved walkway to the upper overlook. The walkway begins at the end of the parking lot and is accessible to people with wheelchairs.

A lower overlook is located at the bottom of 154 wooden steps. More energetic hikers can continue down the half-mile spur trail that drops 600 feet in elevation to the Whitewater River and Foothills Trail. With the exception of the two overlooks near the top, no other views of the falls are offered.

The best views of the falls are from the two overlooks. However, some people venture off the trail to try to get better views. Tragically, several people fell to their deaths or suffered serious injuries at Whitewater Falls.

To be safe, never wade or walk on rocks above the waterfall. Even when dry, the rocks are extremely slippery, and a slip can be FATAL! Viewing these waterfalls from a distance is safer and provides better views.

Foothills Trail

The Foothills Trail stretches along the Blue Ridge Escarpment in North Carolina and South Carolina for 85 miles. After descending the spur trail, hikers may head east on the Foothills Trail to South Carolina, the Lower Whitewater Falls, and other eastward points.

Foothills Trail Conference volunteers provide the majority of trail maintenance. The conference's board includes representatives of managing agencies and landowners. The Nantahala Ranger District of the Nantahala National Forest manages a 4.5-mile segment of the Foothills Trail from the NC-SC State line east of Whitewater Falls to the NC-SC State line, west of the falls.

Day-Use Fee

There is a fee for day use at this recreation area. If you visit frequently, you can purchase an annual pass from the ranger station.

Have a safe visit

At the Whitewater Falls Recreation Area, the following regulations are in force for your safety and to protect the environment.

- Stay behind guard rails and caution signs.
- Stay on the trail. Avoid shortcuts, climbing on boulders, or walking on plants along the trail.
- Leave flowers and plants so others may enjoy them and so plants can generate next year's flowers.
- Picnicking is welcomed, but please place garbage in trash cans.
- Visitors may not drink or carry alcoholic beverages.
- No camping or campfires are permitted within the Whitewater Falls Recreation Area or anywhere along the Whitewater River.
- Keep dogs on leashes.
- Report hazardous conditions to the host in the trailer parked across from the restrooms or to the Nantahala Ranger District office at (828) 524-6441.

For more info. & maps

For more information and maps, contact the Nantahala Ranger District, 90 Sloan Road, Franklin, NC 28734; (828) 524-6441 or by email:

nantahalard@fs.fed.us

Hiking Maps: National Geographic Nantahala & Cullasaja Gorges; USGS Highlands quad.

NC Website:

www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc

